

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 SY-07 USSS-00 IO-03 PRS-01 CPR-01

DRC-01 INRE-00 SSO-00 /059 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4458

INFO USUN NEW YORK

USCINCSO PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 8663

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, AR (PERON)

SUBJ: PERON'S TRIP TO US APPEARS TO BE OFF

REFS: A) BA 8626; B) STATE 231824

1. WHEN I HAD OCCASION NOVEMBER 23 TO DISCUSS PERON'S VISIT TO US INFORMALLY WITH AMB DE LA PLAZA, SPECIAL ADVISER TO FONMIN VIGNES, FORMER SAID HE THOUGHT TRIP WAS UNLIKELY BUT THAT HE EXTRACTED DEFINITIVE DECISION TO BE MADE BY NOVEMBER 26. ON RECEIPT REFTEL B, I THEREFORE SOUGHT PRIVATE MEETING WITH DE LA PLAZA NOVEMBER 27.

2. I ASKED DE LA PLAZA IF FINAL DECISION HAD BEEN MADE. HE SAID TO BEST OF HIS KNOWLEDGE, PERON HIMSELF HAD NOT DECIDED, BUT THAT AMONG HIS ENTOURAGE, OPINION WAS VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS TO MAKE EXTENDED TRIP OF THIS NATURE AT THIS STAGE WOULD BE INADVISABLE IN LIGHT OF PERON'S PRESENT FRAJULE HEALTH. VIGNES, HE SAID, WAS NO LONGER ENCOURAGING PERON TO MAKE TRIP AND WAS IN FACT HOPEFUL IT WOULD BE PUT OFF. DE LA PLAZA UNDERSTOOD BOTH MINECOM GELBARD AND SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER (AND PRIVATE SECRETARY) LOPEZ REGA WERE ADVISING PRESIDENT TO DEFER
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HIS TRIP. DE LA PLAZA SAID HE WOULD RECHECK THIS INFORMATION

WITH VIGNES AND LET ME KNOW SOONEST.

3. IN FURTHER CONVERSATION, DE LA PLAZA SAID THE RISKS TO PERON'S HEALTH INVOLVED IN THE TRIP AT THIS TIME WERE SUCH THAT VIGNES WANTED TO HAVE NO RPT NO RESPONSIBILITY IN CONNECTION WITH HIS MAKING THE TRIP. DE LA PLAZA ALSO REMARKED THAT WHILE THERE WAS NO QUESTION BUT THAT US HAS THE BEST MEDICAL FACILITIES IN THE WORLD, IT WOULD HARDLY BE IN US INTEREST TO HAVE ANYTHING HAPPEN TO PERON WHILE IN US.

4. DE LA PLAZA SAID THAT WHILE IT IS ALMOST CERTAIN THE TRIP WILL NOT TAKE PLACE, THERE IS A PROBLEM IN CONNECTION WITH PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISION. HE SAID PERON'S RELAPSE OF LAST WEEK HAD CAUSED A DEEP SHOCK IN ARGENTINA AND THAT WHILE PUBLIC HAD BEEN REASSURED OVER WEEK-END BY PERON'S APPEARANCE ON TV AND IN NEWSPAPER PHOTOGRAPHS, A FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT TOO SOON THEREAFTER THAT US TRIP IS BEING CANCELLED OR DEFERRED, WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY START ANOTHER WAVE OF RUMOR AND SPECULATION AS TO THE PRESIDENT'S HEALTH. HE THEREFORE FELT THE MATTER WOULD BE ALLOWED TO HANG FOR SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE A CONCLUSIVE PUBLIC STATEMENT IS MADE.

5. LATER SAME EVENING, DE LA PLAZA PHONED TO SAY THAT HE HAD SPOKEN TO VIGNES AND LATTER HAD AUTHORIZED HIM TO CONFIRM FOREGOING ON "PERSONAL AND HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL" BASIS.

6. MORNING PRESS NOVEMBER 28 REPORTS VIGNES WAS QUESTIONED AT PRESS CONFERENCE YESTERDAY ABOUT PERON'S VISIT TO UN. HIS REPLY IS QUOTED AS FOLLOWS: "THERE WAS SUCH AN INTENTION AND PERHAPS THERE WAS CONVERSATION ABOUT IT. HOWEVER, UNQUESTIONABLY THERE ARE MATTERS OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE WHICH COULD PERHAPS POSTPONE FOR A WHILE SUCH A TRIP." ASKED IF THIS WOULD MEAN DELAY BEYOND PRESENT UNGA SESSION, HE REPLIED "THAT WOULD BE SAYING A LOT AND WE CANNOT PIN IT DOWN."

7. SINCE GOA IS OBVIOUSLY SENSITIVE ON ISSUE OF PERON'S CONDITION, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT ON OUR SIDE WE AVOID ANY STATEMENT, BACKGROUND OR OTHERWISE, WHICH COULD FEED SPECULATION ON THIS SCORE. MOREOVER SINCE BOTH DE LA PLAZA AND VIGNES HAVE PERSONAL STAKE IN THE MATTER, I WOULD APPRECIATE VERY MUCH THAT

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WE AVOID IN ANY WAY COMPROMISING THEM AS SOURCES OF FOREGOING.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEALTH, PRESS COMMENTS, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BUENOS08663
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973119/aaaaagcn.tel
Line Count: 109
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: A) BA 8626; B) STATE 231824
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16-Jan-2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <06-Feb-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PERON'S TRIP TO US APPEARS TO BE OFF
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, AR, US, (PERON, JUAN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005